U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/458,319
Amendment dated January 7, 2010
Reply to Office Action of October 9, 2009
Atty Docket No.: 60136.0087USU1

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the

application:

    1-7.   (Canceled)

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8.   (Currently Amended) In an information distribution system including provider equipment and subscriber equipment, said provider equipment communicating to said subscriber equipment information streams including content requested by said subscriber equipment, an apparatus comprising:

a session manager, for interacting with said subscriber equipment and maintaining a plurality of play lists created by the subscriber, wherein each playlist is associated with a respective subscriber, said playlist defining a plurality of content streams to be provided to said subscriber equipment and identifying a location of content streams defined in the playlist and auxiliary streams associated therewith, said playlist further identifying reverse and fast-forward streams associated with each one of said plurality of content streams, each content stream comprising a plurality of splicing entry and exit points dispersed therein to enable transitioning between said plurality of content streams, wherein said splicing entry and exit points are identified within transport packet headers of each one of said plurality of content streams;

a server, for storing content streams configured to facilitate inter-asset transition to provide seamless splicing; and

a server controller for retrieving from said server, content streams defined by said playlist, said content streams being sequentially provided to said subscriber equipment;

said server controller, in response to determining that a remaining portion of a current content stream being provided to said subscriber equipment being is below a threshold, communicating a termination notification to said session manager;

said session manager, in response to <u>receiving</u> said termination notification,

communicating a request to said server controller identifying from said playlist a next

content stream to be provided to said subscriber equipment <u>from the server</u>;

said session manager further maintaining said playlist after content streams defined

by said playlist have been provided to said subscriber equipment and modifying said playlist

in response to playlist modification commands received from said subscriber equipment <u>in</u>

<u>response to input from the subscriber</u>, wherein a next content stream in said playlist is spliced

at an entry point associated with an exit point of a current content stream being provided to

said subscriber equipment.

9.   (Previously presented)   The apparatus of claim 8, wherein:

said modification commands comprise at least one of an add command, a delete

command, a skip forward command, a skip backwards command, a fast forward command

and a rewind command.

10.   (Previously presented)   The apparatus of claim 9, wherein:

said session manager, in response to said add command and said delete command,

respectively adding or deleting a subscriber-indicated content stream from said playlist.

11.   (Previously presented)   The apparatus of claim 9, wherein:

said session manager, in response to said skip forward command and said skip

backwards command, causing said server controller to begin providing to said subscriber

equipment, respectively, a next content stream or a previous content stream within said

playlist.

12. (Previously presented)   The apparatus of claim 9, wherein:

said session manager, in response to said fast forward command and said rewind command, causing said server controller to begin providing to said subscriber equipment, respectively, said fast forward stream or said fast rewind stream associated with a presently provided content stream.

13-14. (Canceled)

15. (Previously presented)   The apparatus of claim 8, wherein said server comprises a plurality of servers, each of said plurality of servers storing at least a respective portion of the content streams available to a subscriber, said server controller causing a transport processor to receive a substantially continuous stream of content for each active subscriber regardless of the server presently storing that content.

16.   (Currently Amended) In an information distribution system including provider equipment and subscriber equipment, said provider equipment communicating content to said subscriber equipment via a distribution network, a provider method comprising the steps of:

establishing a session with a subscriber;

maintaining a plurality of playlists created by the subscriber, wherein each one of said plurality of playlists is associated with a respective subscriber;

generating a playlist for said subscriber if a playlist does not presently exist, said playlist identifying a location of content streams defined in the playlist and auxiliary streams associated therewith and determining a sequence of content streams to be retrieved from a server and coupled to a transport processor for distribution to said subscriber via said distribution network,

each content stream configured to facilitate inter-asset transition to provide seamless splicing and comprising a plurality of splicing entry and exit points dispersed therein to enable transitioning between content streams, wherein said splicing entry and exit points are identified within transport packet headers of each one of said content streams, said playlist further identifying reverse and fast-forward streams associated with said content streams;

in the case of said subscriber transmitting by the subscriber a playlist modification command, modifying said playlist being modified at said provider equipment in response to transmission of said playlist modification command;

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~~in the case of said subscriber~~ transmitting <u>by the subscriber</u> a content stream modification command, ~~modifying~~ said content stream <u>being modified</u> in response to <u>transmission of</u> said content stream modification command;

determining a next content stream to be provided to said subscriber equipment from said playlist <u>created by the subscriber</u>, wherein determining said next content stream comprises:

communicating a termination notification from a server controller to a session manager in response to <u>determining that</u> a remaining portion of a current content stream ~~being~~ provided to said subscriber equipment ~~being~~ <u>is</u> below a threshold; and

in response to <u>transmission of</u> said termination notification, communicating a request from said session manager to said server controller identifying from said playlist of a next content stream to be provided to said subscriber equipment;

closing a present content stream being retrieved from a server and provided to said transport processor;

causing said next content stream to be provided to said transport processor upon the termination of the present content stream provided to said transport processor, wherein said next content stream in said playlist is spliced at an entry point associated with an exit point of said current content stream being provided to said subscriber equipment; and

maintaining said playlist at said session manager <u>for later recall and use by the subscriber</u> after content streams defined by said playlist have been provided to said subscriber equipment.

17.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 16, wherein:

said modification commands provided by the subscriber comprise at least one of an

add command, a delete command, a skip forward command, a skip backwards command, a

fast forward command and a rewind command.

18.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 17, further comprising the

step of:

adding or deleting a subscriber-indicated content stream from said play list in

response to, respectively, said add command and said delete command.

19.   (Previously presented)   The method of claim 18, further comprising the

step of:

in response to said fast forward command and said rewind command, causing said

server controller to begin providing to said subscriber equipment, respectively, said fast

forward stream or said fast rewind stream associated with a presently provided content

stream

20-21. (Canceled)